

Message Text

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10
ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EUR-12 NEA-10 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04

H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 SAM-01 IO-13 AID-05 /097 W
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R 310837Z AUG 76
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2762
INFO AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
AMEMBASSY MANILA
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
AMCONSUL HONG KONG

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EO 11652: N/A
TAGS: PFOR PORG XX LA KN KS MY ID US ASEAN
SUBJECT: POSSIBLE EXPLANATION OF VIETNAMESE SUSPICION OF ASEAN

REF: VIENTIANE 2080 (NOTAL)

1. REFTEL SUMMARIZES SPEECH GIVEN BY LAO PRESIDENT SOUPHANOUVONG AUGUST 19 AT NON-ALIGNED SUMMIT MEETING IN COLOMBO AND NOTES HIS ACCUSATION THAT ASEAN COUNTRIES WERE INVOLVED WITH US IN OPPOSING NATIONAL LIBERATION MOVEMENTS IN THE THREE INDO-CHINA COUNTRIES. NUMBER OF COMMENTATORS ELSEWHERE HAVE NOTED THAT LAO PRESENTLY APPEAR TO BE ACTING AS STALKING HORSE FOR COMMUNIST VIET-NAM IN DENOUNCING ASEAN. REASON FOR USING LAO COULD BE THAT SRV WANTS TO DENOUNCE ASEAN BUT ALSO WANTS TO NORMALIZE RELATIONS WITH ASEAN COUNTRIES AND ANTICIPATES TROUBLE IN DOING BOTH THINGS SIMULTANEOUSLY.

2. IN RECENT CONVERSATION WITH FRENCH EMBASSY COUNSELOR BANGKOK WE EXPRESSED SURPRISE THAT VIETNAMESE SHOULD
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HAVE BEEN SO VEHEMENT IN THEIR OPPOSITION TO ASEAN AND TO

ZONE OF PEACE, FREEDOM AND NEUTRALITY (ZOPFAN). FRENCH COUNSELOR EXPRESSED VIEW THAT, HAD CONCEPT OF ZONE COVERED PEACE, INDEPENDENCE, AND NEUTRALITY, IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN ACCEPTABLE TO COMMUNIST VIET-NAM. HOWEVER, USE OF WORD "FREEDOM" NOT ONLY TOUCHES A SENSITIVE NERVE IN COMMUNIST VIET-NAM (BECAUSE IT IS PRECISELY WHAT REGIME IS OPPOSED TO) BUT ALSO IS WORD WHICH, FOR HISTORIC REASONS, IS ASSOCIATED WITH US AND HAS REGULARLY BEEN USED IN US PUBLIC STATEMENTS. ZOPFAN, IN THIS VIEW, IS FATALLY DEFECTIVE BECAUSE OF USE OF WORD "FREEDOM".

3. COMMENT: FRENCH COUNSELOR RESPONDED IMMEDIATELY TO OUR QUESTION ON SRV OPPOSITION TO ASEAN, IN MANNER WHICH SUGGESTS THIS POINT HAS BEEN EXCHANGED ON FRENCH DIPLOMATIC CIRCUIT. THIS FRENCH VIEW, THOUGH SIMPLISTIC AT FIRST VIEW, HAS MUCH TO COMMEND IT. USE OF TERM "FREEDOM" BY ASEAN COUNTRIES WAS THEIR OWN CHOICE, IN WHICH US PLAYED NO PART. HOWEVER, ASEAN COUNTRIES HAVE BEEN CONSIDERABLY AFFECTED BY AMERICAN RHETORIC IN PAST, AND IT IS POSSIBLE THAT THE FRENCH HAVE SOMETHING HERE.
BURKE

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